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Mongolia: Golden Eagle Festival September 30-October 10, 2009

This tour travels through the unspoiled landscapes of Mongolia, exploring some of the most remarkable and untouched parts of the globe where sites are varied and unique. Take part in the Golden Eagle Festival in Mongolia's beautiful western province. This colorful event includes many of Kazakh's great traditions and customs. Enjoy seeing the royal Golden Eagles flying over the sky in an unforgettable ballet. In order to maintain the event as a festival for the Kazakhs themselves, attendance is limited. You will interact with the Kazakhs and live with them for several days in order to watch the eagle training and discover the culture of Kazakh people.

Sep 30 Ulaanbaatar (L,D)

Arrive in Ulaanbaatar, the capital city of Mongolia. Transfer to hotel. Lunch at local restaurant. Visit National Museum of Mongolian History, presents Mongolian history and culture from the dawn of humans to the present day. Enjoy traditional art performance and Welcome dinner at the Ger Restaurant. Bayongol Hotel

Oct 1 Ulaanbaatar (B,L)

Sightseeing tour includes Gandan Monastery and Natural History Museum. Attend Fashion show for Mongolian costumes. Time to browse the souvenir and cashmere shops. Overnight Bayongol Hotel.

Oct 2 Bayan-Ulgii province (B,L,D)

Transfer to airport for flight (3.5 hours) to Bayan-Ulgii province. Our local staff will meet you at the airport. Visit local museum. Travel 35 kms to central village of Sagsai soum, an administration unit of local area. Overnight in Ger camp.

Oct 3 Bayan-Ulgii province (B,L,D)

The official opening ceremony commences as the participants join the parade on horse with their eagles. The competition begins with each Kazakh displaying his hunting outfit and accessories. The most elaborate and beautiful clothing and accessories are given the highest points. In the afternoon, the Golden Eagles will be evaluated for their speed and agility. The eagles will be released from a cliff and their owner will stand below and signal for them to land upon their arm, as they do during hunting. In the evening watch a Kazakh concert consisting of traditional songs and dances. Overnight in Ger camp.

Oct 4 Bayan-Ulgii province (B,L,D)

Prepare for some exciting action today! The Golden Eagles will be released from a cliff to attack fox skins that will be dragged by their owner on horseback. The eagles will be judged on their success of grabbing the "fox", their speed, and "gripping" technique. As the points for the competitions are being tallied, the Kazakhs will compete in their traditional game called "kukbar" which tests one's horse riding skills, strength and agility. In the late afternoon, the winners of the festival will be announced at the awards ceremony. In the evening, enjoy a celebration dinner. Overnight in Ger camp.

Oct 5-6 Bayan-Ulgii province-Kazakh settlements (B,L,D)

On Oct 5, drive approx 60 km to Kazakh settlements. We live with Kazakh families in their settlement. Their gers are slightly larger than Mongolian Gers and are decorated with brightly colored rugs. We will enjoy their hospitality and friendliness and immerse deeply into their culture. You will see their traditional method to make colorful rugs. Overnight in the Ger of local family.

Oct 7-8 Bayan-Ulgii province-Uriankhai settlements (B,L,D)

Drive approx 90 km to Uriankhai settlements. We will stay with Mongolian nomad families of Uriankhai ethnic group. Learn about their culture, which is totally different from Kazakhs. We will observe and be involved in some of their daily activities. Enjoy half day horse riding. Overnight in the Ger of local family.

Oct 9 Fly to Ulaanbaatar (B,L,D)

Morning travel to Ulgii and flight back to Ulaanbaatar. Transfer to hotel. Farewell dinner.

Oct 10 Depart for home. (B)

PRICE: \$2996 per person based on min 4 people, single room at hotel in Ulaanbaatar \$165, single ger \$75

Includes: All activities described in the itinerary, twin/double basis hotel accommodation, Escorted by English speaking Mongolian guide, Golden Eagle festival entrance fees, sightseeing and entrance fee to Protected Area, domestic flights, all transfers by minibus in the city and by 4WD Russian minivan in the countryside. Meals as mentioned per day itinerary.

Does Not Include: International air, travel insurance, mineral (bottled) water and alcoholic drinks, tips and gratuities, laundry and items of a personal nature.

Group size: Min 2, max 6 people

Accommodation: 3 nights Bayongol hotel 3 star, 3 nights Ger camp, 4 nights stay – local family gers

Meals: Inclusive meals are indicated in detailed day by day itinerary above and are shown on the day they are provided (B = breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner)

Transport: Mini bus (made in Korea) is used in Ulaanbaatar and 4WD minivans (made in Russia) are used for countryside transfers

Please Note: The flight schedules for flights within Mongolia are subject to change. The itinerary will be masterfully adjusted so that we will be able to fully enjoy all the experiences/activities described in the itinerary.